

## **WILLINGTON PARISH COUNCIL**

### **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION STATEMENT**

Whilst the public has a statutory right to attend meetings of a local council there is no statutory or common law right for public to participate in a meeting, unless expressly permitted by a council.

Willington Parish Council believes that public participation can be a benefit and should therefore be encouraged. In addition, Willington Parish Council considers that the model standing orders for the procedures regarding public participation are too restrictive and have therefore adopted amended procedures. A brief summary is as follows:

- Meetings shall be open to the public unless their presence is prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted or for other special reasons.
- Members of the public are permitted, at the Chairman's discretion, to make representations, answer questions and give evidence in respect of any item of business included on the agenda.
- The period of time for public participation will be at the Chairman's discretion, but as guidance should not exceed 15 minutes.
- The number and length of times each member of the public is entitled to speak will be at the Chairman's discretion.
- A question asked by a member of the public during a public participation session at a meeting shall not require a response or debate.
- The Chairman may direct that a response to a question posed by a member of the public be referred to a Councillor for an oral response or to an employee for a written or oral response.
- A record of the public participation session at a meeting shall be included in the minutes of that meeting.
- Any person speaking at a meeting shall address his comments to the Chairman.
- Only one person is permitted to speak at a time. If more than one person wishes to speak, the Chairman shall direct the order of speaking.
- Photography, recording, broadcasting or transmitting the proceedings of a meeting by any means is not permitted without the Council's prior written consent.

Without appropriate standing orders, a public participation session is likely to lack purpose and stray onto business not on the agenda and may result in the meeting overrunning.

No resolutions at a meeting should be based solely on the comments and representations made in the public participation session. When councillors formally consider business on the agenda, they will have the benefit of any comments and representations previously made by the public, along with any other relevant information and issues raised during their own discussion and debate.

Extracts have been taken from 'Standing Orders for Local Councils' as published by The National Association of Local Councils, 109 Great Russell Street. London. WC1B 3LD published in 2010.